



Press Release:
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Science Panels to Help Citizens Evaluate Pebble Baseline Studies

The Colorado-based Keystone Center is poised to launch a series of independent science panels that will help Alaska citizens evaluate baseline environmental and socioeconomic studies associated with the proposed Pebble mine in southwest Alaska.

The Keystone Center's science panels will kick off on December 3, 2010 with a day-long panel focused on Responsible Large-scale Mining – Global Perspectives. The panel will bring together international experts in the fields of engineering, geology and geochemistry, ecology, and anthropology, who represent the mining industry, academic institutions, and non-governmental conservation organizations. Panel members will share broad perspectives on responsible large-scale mining in locations throughout the world.

The Keystone science panels will take place on the UAA campus and will be open to the public. The panel events will also be filmed by 360 North and will be broadcast state-wide on public television stations and GCI cable. A live web-stream will be available on The Keystone Center's website (www.keystone.org).

Subsequent science panels will help citizens evaluate the extensive environmental and socioeconomic studies that Pebble and previous companies have been conducting for more than five years. A detailed description of independent science panel topics and corresponding baseline studies will be released well in advance of panel events.

While the independent science panels are the primary focus of the Keystone Center's dialogue on the proposed Pebble mine, the Center is planning subsequent phases of the Keystone dialogue. These proposed phases are aimed at assessing the sufficiency of baseline studies for decision-making and engaging citizens and Pebble in exploring planning options and sustainable community development proposals that might be considered.

The Keystone Center is a non-profit organization founded more than 35 years ago to help government agencies resolve inevitable conflicts associated with newly established environmental laws and regulations. Keystone has emerged as a pioneer in helping agencies, organizations, and industries develop proactive and collaborative approaches to public decision making.

While the Keystone Center is contracting with the Pebble Limited Partnership to develop and carry out the independent science panel process, the Center has a solid track record of maintaining its independence from clients, whether they are government agencies, non-governmental organizations, or private industries.

According to Todd Bryan, Ph.D., senior associate with The Keystone Center, “Keystone’s role in the Pebble Project is to help citizens make more informed decisions about the critical choices before them, whether they are opponents, proponents or are on the fence regarding the proposed mine.” Bryan adds, “We are hired because of our ability to be impartial and independent and our success depends on it.”

To ensure its independence and impartiality, The Keystone Center is working with an independent Science Advisory Committee made up of highly respected scientists from the continental U.S. and Alaska who are providing assistance without compensation. The advisory committee is helping The Keystone Center identify and secure scientists who will participate in the series of independent science panels.

The Keystone Center is also following procedures and policies adopted by the National Academies of Science (NAS) and the National Research Council (NRC) for conducting independent scientific reviews of complex and controversial development projects. Among those policies is that panel members must serve without compensation, except for modest travel expenses, and must not have direct conflicts of interest.

Dr. Bryan also noted that the Keystone process, which began in the fall of 2008, is not a substitute for the public involvement and regulatory procedures that Pebble is required to follow. Nor does the Keystone process replace the government agency Technical Working Groups that have evaluated Pebble’s baseline study and data collection procedures.

“The Keystone Center is committed to helping the present generation make more informed decisions regarding the future of their region and its people” Bryan noted. “By bringing together independent scientists who can help citizens evaluate Pebble’s baseline studies, the Keystone science panels provide another opportunity for public engagement that complements what is already occurring.”